

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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AMERICAN ALLIGATOR STUDY ORDERED

The status of the American alligator throughout its range in the United States will be the subject of an intensive study ordered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Director Lynn A. Greenwalt announced today.

The study comes in response to a petition from the Governor of Louisiana who requested the Secretary of the Interior to remove the alligator from the endangered species list in three parishes along the southwestern coastal marshes of Louisiana. Further, he requested that in the southcentral and southeastern coastal marshes of Louisiana the American alligator be reclassified as a "threatened" species, a new category allowed under the 1973 Endangered Species Act.

The study ordered today will review the American alligator's status throughout its range in the wild. The Fish and Wildlife Service has notified the Governors of North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas of the study and has asked for data on the status of the reptile in each state. The public is also invited to submit any factual information it has for review by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The American alligator, a roughbacked reptile with a broad rounded snout as contrasted to the crocodile's sharp pointed snout, was originally listed as an endangered species because it was jeopardized by heavy poaching

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which has been reduced by increased state enforcement and Federal laws. Efforts to reopen seasons and to permit the sale of hides are underway in several states.

Federal law prohibits shipment of alligators, their hides, and hide products across state lines. The City of New York and the State of California have passed regulations prohibiting trade in alligator skins.

The exact number of American alligators in the wild is unknown at present. On Federal lands a 1970 census showed over 50,000 in six southeastern states.

The purpose of the review of the status of the American alligator will be to determine if any populations of the reptile should be reclassified as a threatened species or removed entirely from the lists of threatened or endangered wildlife. Previous endangered species legislation dealt only with species and subspecies, not with population segments. The 1973 Act, however, does speak to population segments and allows a species to be classified differently within any significant part of its range based upon its numbers, distribution, and general population.

Interested parties should submit their data on the American alligator to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240. All views submitted through October 14, 1974, will be considered and public notice of the results of the review will be given after all the evidence has been reviewed and a decision reached.

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